



[Home](#) > [Research](#) > [Responses to Information Requests](#)

RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

23 December 2003

RUS42206.E

Russia: Birth certificates issued in Birobidzhan in 1949; content; language; application form
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Jewish Autonomous Region located in Russia's far east is often referred to by the name of its capital Birobidzhan (Birobidzan, Birobidjan, Birobijan) (*Columbia Encyclopedia* 2003; *Pravda.ru* 15 Oct. 2002; BBC 8 July 2002). Birobidzhan was formed in 1928 as a homeland for the Soviet Jewish population and later became an autonomous region in 1934 (*Columbia Encyclopedia* 2003). In the late 1940s, approximately one quarter of the region's population was Jewish (ibid.).

Information on Soviet-era birth certificates is very scarce among the sources consulted, and the Research Directorate was unable to find references specifically concerning Birobidzhan. The Political Asylum Research and Documentation Service (PARDS) of Princeton, New Jersey noted that Soviet-era birth certificates mentioned the nationality of the parents and would also indicate whether a person was Jewish (June 1999, Sec. III.A.24). Please consult the numerous Responses discussing the issue of nationality on Soviet birth certificates, including, most recently RUS34401.FE of 11 May 2000, ZZZ34985.E of 10 August 2000 and ZZZ32611.E of 12 August 1999.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

BBC. 8 July 2002. Kate Goldberg. "Russia's Forgotten Jewish Land."
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1977568.stm>> [Accessed 27 Nov. 2003]

Columbia Encyclopedia. 2003. 6th ed. "Jewish Autonomous Region."
<<http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/J/JewishA1u.asp>> [Accessed 27 Nov. 2003]

Political Asylum Research and Documentation Service (PARDS). June 1999. *Ukraine-Profile of Asylum Claims and Country Conditions*. <<http://pards.org/ukraine1999.doc>> [Accessed 26 Nov. 2003]

Pravda.ru. 15 October 2002. "Poisonous Snakes Crawling into Birobijan Houses."
<<http://english.pravda.ru/region/2002/10/15/38149.html>> [Accessed 26 Nov. 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

Dialog

The Director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, National Archives and Reference Centre was unable to provide information.

Unsuccessful attempt to contact the Claims Conference, New York.

Unsuccessful attempt to contact the Jewish genealogical service JewishGen Inc.

Unsuccessful attempt to contact the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Center for Jewish History.

Internet sites, including:

Focal Point (F/8). "Last Jews of Birobidzhan."

JewishGen Databases

Stalin's Forgotten Zion (Swarthmore College)

United States. Department of State. Visa Reciprocity and Document Finder

United States. Social Security Administration

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